News release

Hurricane Wilma en route to Florida

23 October 2005

At 7 a.m. UK time Sunday, the centre of Hurricane Wilma was located about 55 miles north of Cancun, Mexico, or about 370 miles west-southwest of Key West, Florida.

Wilma is drifting slowly north-eastwards and increase in forward speed is expected later today.

Maximum sustained winds are near 100 m.p.h., with higher gusts. At present, Wilma is a Category 2 Hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, but some strengthening is possible today.

Hurricane force winds extend outwards up to 70 miles from the centre, Tropical Storm force winds extend outward up to 200 miles.

Wilma is expected to produce additional rainfall accumulations of 10 to 15 inches (250 to 380 mm), through Sunday across portions of western Cuba and the Yucatan Peninsula, with isolated maximum storm totals approaching 50 inches (1200 mm).

Large swells generated by Wilma continue to propagate into the eastern Gulf of Mexico and are likely to affect portions of the northern Gulf coast throughout Sunday.

Rainfall across southern Florida, including the Keys, up to the end of Tuesday, is expected to be 4 to 8 inches (100 to 200 mm), with isolated maximum amounts of 12 inches (300 mm) possible.

Storm surge flooding of 8 to 13 ft (2 to 3 m) above normal tide levels is possible along the south-west Florida coast and near to the south of where the centre of Wilma makes landfall. Storm surge flooding of 5 to 8 ft (1 to 2 m) is possible in the Florida Keys and Florida Bay.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office web site gives advice on the situation for tourists or for people who have friends and family in the area.

For the latest satellite imagery from the area and information on the movement of the storm check the Met Office tropical cyclone information page, which includes a link to the National Hurricane Center and major national weather services around the world.

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